



Royal Show
Midsummer
Common
1894

148.81

Cambridge COMMONS Chronology 1888 to 1990 by Mike Petty

Includes Parker's Piece, The Backs and other open spaces

Note:

Ena Mitchell researched two publications containing details of developments on Parker's Piece and four Cambridge commons. Many of the items below refer to these publications

Notes on the history of Parker's Piece, Cambridge, by Ena Mitchell. 1984 'MPP'

Notes on the history of four Cambridge commons, by Ena Mitchell. 1985 'MMC'

Covers Midsummer Common, Jesus Green, Butt Green, Donkey's Common and Petersfield.

c.32.3 - Commons

1894

Cambridge University & Corporation Act gives considerable power of regulation over commons including power to enclose from time to time all or some part of Midsummer or Jesus Common & Butt Green [MPP.49, MMC.28]

1894

Royal Show held on 64a of Midsummer Common, Midsummer Fair held on Stourbridge common [MMC.9]

1894

Christ's Pieces bandstand erected, was originally built for Royal Show on Midsummer Common 56 04 21 [1.18]

1894

Parker's Piece lamp standard erected at cost of £39 [1.4]

1895

Coldham's Common new railway line & sketch of excavator [NI.1.8]

1896

Parker's Piece protest re closure to footballers [NI.2.1]

1897

Great Jubilee celebrations include dinner to old folks on Parker's Piece, largest witnessed in Cambridge & sports on Midsummer Common [MPP.51, MMC. 29]

1897 06 07

A good number of people are attending the fete on Midsummer Common. In that part of the enclosure nearest Maid's Causeway, shooting galleries, stalls, cocoanut shies and one of Thurston's steam roundabouts were gathered and kept matters lively. During the afternoon a fancy dress bicycle carnival took place, handsome prizes were awarded for the best costumes. The first prize for the ladies, a diamond and ruby crescent brooch, was awarded to Miss L. Unwin of Newnham who, with helmet, breastplate, shield and trident made a dignified Britannia. Miss Unwin will also receive the silver "King of the Road" lamp and baby bell given by the Humber Cycle Supply Co 1897 06 07

1897 06 19

Cambridge will have its bonfire on Jubilee night and from the nature of the site we shall have it all to ourselves. Midsummer Common is to be the venue, and as that is about the flattest part of Cambridge there is not much prospect of its being seen beyond the limits of the town, although should the fire be a big one and the night fairly dark, the glow in the sky ought to be seen all over the fen country. One of the most interesting experiments will be that of the search-light on Ely cathedral. The great shaft of light sent out by the search-light, first in one direction and then another, should send a message not only to Cambridge, but over a great portion of East Anglia – editorial 1897 06 19

1897 06 24

One of the most interesting events of the Jubilee week was the dinner to 1,000 aged people of Cambridge which took place on Parker's Piece. From 10 a.m. an army of helpers 400 strong, all as busy as bees, were engaged in preparing the tents, two in number, for the expected guests. The old people began to arrive very early, with beaming faces and expectant eyes. "It's not the dinner so much", said an old lady of some 75 summers, "It's taking part in the Jubilee dinner and meeting with all the others". Gowns of antique stuff, redolent of sweet lavender, that had lain by for years protected against the ravages of moth, were brought out in honour of the occasion. One old gentleman had hunted up a pair of white jean trousers that he went courting in 50 years ago 1897 06 24

1897 06 25

It is a matter of satisfaction that the subscriptions which have been received by the Jubilee Dinner Committee were sufficient to give a tea to some 4,000 school children of Cambridge between the ages of seven and 12. A mug and plate was provided for each child, and the plates when they sat down were furnished with bread and butter and two lumps of cake. Once in the enclosure they were each presented with a medal commemorating the Jubilee. Until tea commenced the enclosure was a perfect babel with the children's' chatter. Far more children than expected came, and some of the school teachers had written their own tickets. Not a few of the children attending were obviously either over or under the age which had been decided. All were soon provided for and the committee were able to keep replenishing the tables. As they finished tea the children left the tables, and, shouting, romped and danced to the band's music. The sight was enough to set the milk of human kindness surging through the heart of the most misguided misanthrope 1897 06 25

Here and there among the little folk: impressions of an onlooker. The five immense tents pitched on Parker's Piece were crammed with youngsters full of the restless energy of youth. What a sight it was to see them come dancing down the various roads leading to Parker's Piece, swarming over the iron fences, racing across the greensward, and roguishly crying the policemen on duty in the vicinity of the feast. Not one could walk sedately or cease from whistling for very joy. The desertion of teachers, the

near approach of the end of the Jubilee holiday, everything was forgotten in the delight of the children's day 1897 06 25

1898 06 25

At last, but not at length, for only part of it is ready yet, the spot known hitherto as the St Matthews recreation ground, Cambridge, has had an official opening. Now it is rechristened "St Matthews Piece". The aspect is as yet of the distinctly "clean and not gaudy" type, comprising a rectangular enclosure, around which a spiked fence rears its effective points, and the inside is gravel all over, offering unbounded scope for young Barnwellians to develop "gravel rash". In 1892 the Corporation had represented the desirability of obtaining a piece of open ground in that thickly populated neighbourhood. Many delays occurred, and in 1895 the Commons committee took the ground over. They found a great many obstacles in the way of levelling and preparing the ground and there were many legal questions which took a long time. CDN 1898 06 25

1900

1900 07 25

Sir – I was pleased to notice that someone has at last had the courage to write about the wretched condition of Parker's Piece. Our last wicket was not only full of holes but we had a little hill rising a yard and a half in front of the block. Twelve shillings were paid for this wicket and a tent, whereas a college ground and pavilion (with a splendid wicket) can be hired for 7s.6d. Our cricket club have been so disgusted with the wickets that we have decided not to play again this season on Parker's Piece unless it is impossible to get a wicket elsewhere – Disgusted Cricketer 00 07 25

1900 09 10

The controversy relating to the maintenance of Parker's Piece is by no means a new one. It is several years since footballers and cricketers perceived that the ground, both in summer and winter was not all that could be desired and each year the feeling of dissatisfaction has become more apparent. But with the increasing number of persons crossing and re-crossing Parker's Piece it was impossible to keep the cricket pitches in a perfect condition; and with regard to forbidding football in times of frost, it was absolutely impossible to tell within a few hours whether or not a ground would be in a fit state for play 00 09 10

1902 09 24

Cambridge Football Association heard that on many college grounds football was played up to Christmas and the ground was prepared for cricket afterwards. The same thing should be done on Parker's Piece. Manuring had already begun. The manure was the sweeping of the streets, which had not been sifted, but had been raked. People were going over the ground and picking up stones. To start to play football and then proceed to manure the ground was giving with one hand and taking away with the other. The surveyor had said he hoped that some rain would come and wash it in. CDN 1902 09 24

1904 11 03

Chesterton Council has purchased land in Carlyle Road, Cambridge, for a recreation ground. They bought rights in the Brickfield Estate from Mrs Wragg-Gurnie and frontages to Alpha Road from Mr Thoday for £1,350. They then sold off the frontages and after paying for the land were left with a bill for £425 together with a further amount for fencing, laying out and planting the ground. This was a very small sum for so large a piece of land and they had carried out a great improvement in Carlyle Road by widening it from Dalrymple Terrace to the end of the road. 1904 11 03

1905 05 16

An attempt has been made to remedy the serious defect of the new cattle drinking places on Midsummer Common. A concrete wall has been built to prevent the sewage flowing into the water. Unfortunately it also stops the majority of the cattle from drinking at all and so the stockmen have to drive them some distance to another site which rapidly gets into an indescribably filthy condition. The cattle are in fact consuming their own sewage 05 05 16b

1905 07 15

Coe Fen was the scene of an interesting fire-extinguishing demonstration by the Valor Company. A light wooden erection had been constructed coated by three gallons of tar and a shavings and straw saturated with motor spirit was heaped around. It was ignited by a match and with such violence did the flames break out that the watching crowd was forced to fall back. The representative brought the appliance into operation and the fire was subdued in about 25 seconds. 05 07 15dd

1905 08 15

Proposed cycle track, Midsummer Common – 05 08 15a & b

1905 10 26

Cambridge councillors discussed an alternative route from Madingley Road to the Cattle Market by constructing a road from Barton Road over the river by Newnham Mill Pit and along Coe Fen Lane to Trumpington Road. Two bridges would have to be erected and the Leys School would give up a strip of land. But there was no argument in favour of making a winding lane into a straight road unless it was for traffic. It was a bad system to introduce a big scheme piecemeal and commit the council first by one step and then another. 05 10 26b

1906 06 23

Sir – I remember the winter of 1860 when Midsummer Common was covered with water. A severe frost set in and for two months there were torchlight processions and skaters appearing and disappearing like phantoms along the course. There was horseracing in the summer and two large wooden stands erected. Some things have not changed: the miserable, horrid, slow old ‘grinds’ or ferries. When will Cantabs wake up and have free bridges for foot passengers? – An Ely Old Boy 06 06 23c & d

1907 04 06

Alexandra Garden opened - was a rubbish tip bought for £300, Alpha Road frontage sold for building for £1,000, garden area sold to council for £350 [1.22]

1908

Commons committee recommend tennis on Parker’s Piece, bowls & tennis on Christ’s Pieces (sees that distinction between common for recreation only & recreation ground had become blurred) MPP.52]

1909 09 03

The unanimous opposition to the scheme to drive a road across Parker’s Piece should have disposed of it for ever. Should some rash member of the Council wish to make his name by re-introducing it he should first study the indenture made on March 23rd 1612 between the Master and Fellows of Trinity College and the Mayor and Burgesses of Cambridge by which the Piece became the property of the people. One clause stipulates that either body ‘consenting to any act to impeach this agreement’ should forfeit £300 to the other. It seems to me that the recent proposals would come under this head CWN 09 09 03 [2.1]

1910

1910 08 19

Christ’s Pieces affords a welcome glimpse of colour to hundreds of workers as they pass from one side of Cambridge to the other and numerous people in their spare time spend many a pleasant half-hour there. To tired mothers it is a boon unspeakable for their children can be allowed to run about at will, free from the imminent deadly peril of the recklessly-ridden bicycle and the death-dealing motor. The grass is as smooth as a tennis lawn, the trees and shrubs beautifully green and the garden plots a delight to the eye thanks to Mr Nunn who has been keeper of the Pieces for nearly 30 years. 10 08 19

1911

Coronation George V celebrations include variety entertainment & fireworks on Parker's Piece & military tournament on Midsummer Common

1911 05 05

An undergraduate from Trinity College was fined for playing golf on Jesus Green to the danger of passers-by. The lad said there was no notice and he had seen people playing there for the last two years. There could be a danger if anyone had been on the Green, but there was nobody there when he was playing. The constable had seen him with his club and could have stopped him but allowed him to play before asking for his name, college and year saying third year men generally got more heavily fined than Freshmen. But the Chief Constable said that Freshmen were often let off with a caution 11 05 05

1911 06 23

The Coronation of King George V and Queen Mary at Westminster Abbey was attended by scenes unprecedented in the history of the Empire. In Cambridge a strong wind struggled wildly with noble flags and dainty decorations alike. Immense crowds of people walked round the streets and endorsed the judges' choice of Stetchford Dairies' premises as having the premier decorative scheme. The Dorothy Café was a very fine second best. Coronation celebrations: electric searchlight on Castle Hill; no drunkenness, include variety entertainment & fireworks on Parker's Piece [MPP.53, MMC.p30] 11 05 06 TT] 11 06 23 & a, b,c

1911 10 13

Mr Moorhouse, who was recently an undergraduate in Cambridge, caused a good deal of excitement by making an unexpected descent on in his monoplane on Parker's Piece. He was flying from Brooklands to Huntingdon and was making a good trip in perfect weather when, on nearing Cambridge, which he at first thought to be Huntingdon, he found himself short of petrol. At Trumpington his monoplane was flying at a height of 9,000 feet and then commenced gradually to descend. Mr Moorhouse alighted near the large central electric light standard on Parker's Piece. An immense crowd quickly ascended, the airman's visitors including the Mayor (Ald. George Stace). With some of his college friends, Mr Moorhouse attended a performance of 'Niobe' at the New Theatre and for some hours the monoplane was the centre of attraction. Wheeled up by the University Arms, it was temporarily housed under a tarpaulin and protected by police. The next morning, with 20 policemen keeping the crowd 'clear', Mr Moorhouse left for Huntingdon. 11 10 13 CIPof

1911 10 13

Mr Moorhouse paid a second 'flying visit' to Cambridge. The footballers playing on Midsummer Common abandoned their game at once when the machine came into view over Castle Hill. The aeroplane looked as if it must come down among the crowd, but the airman managed the descent very cleverly, and, travelling a short distance only a few feet from the ground, eventually alighted very smoothly rather less than a hundred yards from the railings on the Maid's Causeway side. On his ascent the machine rose gracefully and easily over the trees and the river. It quickly attained a height of nearly 1,000 feet before he made a circle over Chesterton and then sped off towards Huntingdon, He is an intrepid young man of whom more will doubtless be heard in the future 11 10 13b

1911 12 01

The young airman, W.B.R. Moorhouse flew over to Cambridge and alighted on Butt's Green, departing two hours later. He took with him a parcel of shoes made for him by Frank Dalton of Bridge Street that he'd ordered a week ago. Several improvements had been made in the monoplane since his last visit including a bottle labelled 'Cherry Brandy' fixed inside the 'conning tower' fitted up with a flexible tube with a mouthpiece so that he could take a 'nip' when so disposed. The news rapidly spread and several hundred spectators watched his take off. 11 12 01j

1912

Corporation purchase 12½ acres at Cherry Hinton & Romsey for recreation ground & suggest using cattle market field in mean time [2.4]

1912 05 17

Romsey Town residents presented a memorial containing 1,018 signatures suggesting the council should purchase a piece of land for use as a recreation ground. In March 1898 a committee had backed the idea and various efforts had been made to secure a suitable site without result. They contributed to the upkeep of other open spaces and felt it was their turn to have one. It was too far for the young children and old folk to go to Parker's Piece. Meanwhile a public-spirited individual had offered to buy a piece of building land in Castle End to be kept open for perpetuity. 12 05 17b

1913 11 01

Girl drowns in ditch on Coe Fen, want lights on public footpath [2.5]

1913

Lammas Land acquired as recreation ground [2.7]

1913 01 24

Plans have been announced for the creation of a recreation ground on Midsummer Common between Victoria Avenue and Park Parade. One acre will be levelled for cricket, belts of shrubs and avenues of trees planted and a footpath from Park Street to the High Bridge abolished. It was not intended to lay it out as an ornamental park but provide space for healthy physical exercises enabling youth to develop both muscle and brain. 13 01 24g

1913 04 25

An Inquiry into plans to acquire land adjoining Vinery Road as a recreation ground for Romsey heard that it was quite a new neighbourhood; 35 years ago there were very few houses. But one of the streets was only 27 feet wide. Children had to play in the street and there a large number of police and railway men living in the area who needed to sleep during the daytime. They needed a recreation ground: it was not safe for youngsters to go to Parker's Piece and Coldham's Common had two rifle ranges and burgesses could pasture cattle there 13 04 25 p10 CIP

1913 05 16

Proposals to turn Jesus Green into a recreation ground and exclude animals met with protests from stockholders. It was important to maintain the standard and quality of milk and their animals preferred that part of the common because it was quieter and more shaded. If they had to move their cows off on to other commons these would become congested. They should fight to maintain their ancient grazing rights. Sportsmen had already got Parker's Piece for cricket and football, Christ's Pieces for bowls and tennis with Donkey Common and Petersfield for resting in. If the Corporation wanted another recreation ground they should buy one. 13 05 16 p9 CIP

1913 06 13

Lammas Land should be made into Newnham recreation ground 13 06 13 p7 CIP

1914 05 08

Although there was a crowd of 2,000 at the annual demonstration of the Cambridge Trades Union on Parker's Piece on Sunday afternoon, everything was exceedingly quiet and orderly, the speeches were mild almost to dullness and did not provoke the smallest opposition. The resolution in favour of a 48 hours' working week and a minimum wage of thirty shillings was carried. It remained for the irrepressible suffragettes to create the only diversion, but even that was mild. 14 05 08d

1914 06 19

An Inquiry was held into council proposals to borrow money to purchase a recreation ground in Newnham. It was Lammas Land where people had common rights to pasture a cow between August and April. At present it was being used for cricket, football and golf. There was no golf course, play

being with a club and ball. But they had no business there which is why it should become a recreation ground giving access to the whole of the river. At present the lands belonged to colleges and others and were fenced only by hedges 14 06 19 p10 [MMC.31]

1914 08 14

Territorials paraded on Parker's Piece then marched at ease, their rifles slung or at the slope as it pleased them off to the station 14 08 14 p6

1914 08 16

Soldiers encamped on Common, Brunswick Walk residents bring pails of water for men, hot meals etc; people flock to see & give fruit though soldiers pestered by hawkers; refreshment tents & waiting rooms established, Wesley Church opens recreation room & would pray for individuals, but pubs close at 9pm - 14 08 16 [4.21,5a.13,6.9]

1914 08 24

Cambridge people are adding to the comfort of the soldiers encamped here. A refreshment tent has been set up for the artillerymen on the Polo Ground at Trumpington with another on Mr Matthew's meadow, Cherry Hinton Road. The Church Institute allows soldiers the use of their billiard table. There is a reading room in the Newnham School for the camp on Lammas Ground and a games room at the Prospect Church in Eden Street with writing material and picture postcards. Many socks for soldiers are being taken to the small striped tent on Midsummer Common and shirts would also be appreciated 14 08 28 p4

1914 08 28

A novel concert was given for men encamped on Midsummer Common: the motor launch Viscountess Bury was moored beside the bank at Stourbridge Common and its top deck used by the Magpies Concert Party was a platform. The launch was a pretty sight, decorated with vari-coloured lights and hundreds of men, including officers, sat on the sloping bank. Each song was enthusiastically enjoyed. The vicar of Chesterton gave an address during the interval and invited the men to attend Holy Communion on Sunday morning 14 08 28 p7

1914 08 28

A respectable Chesterton chimney sweep was charged with buying two pairs of woollen pants from soldiers camped on Midsummer Common. A constable on duty in plain clothes saw a soldier put something in a white pillowslip he was carrying; when challenged accused said it was food for his children. He found banana, meat and some mackerel, but there were also two pairs of pants with a regimental number – 6178, also W.D. and the broad arrow. The soldier said he was short of money and did not want them; they were hot, woollen things and not necessary at this time of year. Other men stole pants soldiers had washed and put on railings to dry 14 08 28 p7

1914 09 11

When the war began Cambridge Scouts were anxious to help and a committee was formed. Requests came from every quarter. For the first fortnight Scout patrols, aided by members of the C.U.O.T.C., guarded by day and night the important telegraph wires on the Newmarket to London road. Some were sent to Ramsgate and Sandwich to do coastguard work until replaced by military authorities. Others assisted in the recreation and refreshment tents for the military camps on Midsummer Common, Coldham's Common, Coe Fen, Parker's Piece, Huntingdon Road and Stourbridge Common. They have provided a secretary and bugler for Major Comber at Pembroke College and at Corpus the Board of Military Studies has used them as messengers. They have collected large quantities of magazines and papers for the military hospitals at the Leys School and Trinity College. Now they are returning to school

1914 10 16

Troops may be based Parker's Piece, p5

1914 10 23 Bethune inspects troops Parkers Piece

1914 11 20

The Germans had a great network of spies, County Councillors were told. The county should be purged of all spies or people of treasonable actions. The Emergency committees which were being formed should ensure people were not installing secret petrol stores for Zeppelins or watch for partisans with carrier pigeons or wireless apparatus. University Laboratories were doing much undisclosed research involving explosives and chemicals and employed a high proportion of aliens. A man who had watched army evolutions on Parker's Piece was pursued and arrested by two police constables after an old lady denounced him as a spy. A large number of naturalised German people lived locally but in the zeal to put down espionage an enormous amount of injustice had been done. 14 11 20

1914 12 04

Cambridgeshire Battalion inspection Parker's Piece

1914 12 04

Chance for Women Policemen. It is not so long ago (writes Free Lance) since Lady Darwin suggested the appointment of one or two women policemen for the Borough of Cambridge, and if only part of what I hear is correct, there would be plenty of scope for the services of such an official in Cambridge just now. Reports reach me of a most undesirable state of things existing after nightfall on Parker's Piece and other open spaces and it is suggested that clergy and ministers should take the matter up with a view to asking the military authorities whether it would not be possible to keep these places under keen surveillance at night. The Women's Franchise Association, too, now that they are experiencing a time of more or less inactivity, might with advantage, exercise their influence upon the young girls to be found in these spots at such undesirable hours.

1914 12 11

Parker's Piece parade cancelled due state ground

1914 12 25

Storm and Floods responsible for considerable damage to telegraph and telephone wires. The heavy downpour of rain and the blinding snowstorm late at night found the weak spots in an enormous number of house roofs in Cambridge, and the exceptional downpour swelled the stream of the Cam until the water flowed over the banks. The greater part of Midsummer Common was covered with water and the paths were impassable. Boathouse and boathouse yards were flooded and military men who were billeted in the boathouses were seriously inconvenienced. In several instances they were compelled to seek billets elsewhere. Thousands of acres of land in and around Cambridge were flooded. 14 12 25 CIP

1915 01 22

Troops Inspected. General Sir Ian Hamilton, on Wednesday inspected the troops quartered in Cambridge. Accompanied by General Bruce Hamilton and a number of staff officers, the Inspecting Officer took up a position in Gonville Place and the troops marched past the saluting base in column of route. Earlier in the day the men had marched by various routes, and on their return they concentrated in three columns on Hyde Park Corner and then marched down Gonville Place past General Sir Ian Hamilton. A large crowd assembled on Parker's Piece to witness the imposing military scene, and townspeople assembled in large numbers at other points of vantage. A great crowd gathered to watch General Hamilton inspect troops on Parker's Piece. After the mounted officers came the communications company – cyclists, field telegraphs and flag signallers on horseback. An armoured car and a squad of motor-cyclists came next, then the cavalry, infantry, Maxim guns, Howitzer batteries and ammunition train. One horse took fright at the music of the drums and bugles and dashed towards the Inspecting Officer. It seemed as if would be run down but he stood his ground and a staff officer dashed forward to seize the bridle and pull it up. However one trooper was thrown from his horse, his foot caught in the stirrups and he was dragged some distance 15 01 22 CIP

1915 02 12

King visits to inspect troops quartered in Cambridge on Parker's Piece, visits FEGH. Khaki-clad soldiers drawn up on Parker's Piece received his majesty with the Royal Salute ... inspected signal section consisting of a couple of motor cars and a number of motor cycles and inspecting a wireless station ... Then visited EGH and motored to station ... no civic reception ... no public announcement so small crowds ... streets cleared of traffic ... fleet of cars seen coming from station ... Officers and staff on foot – no horses, cannon or vehicles as impossible to get all these on Piece Troops occupied four sides of Piece ... cavalry along Regent Terrace ... various artillery units ... King wore khaki military top coat, riding breeches ... flagstaff in middle ... Inspected cavalry, artillery, infantry, ASC, RAMC and National Reserves ... march past Inspected motor cars, motor cycles ... At FEGH visited kitchen, operating theatre where operations actually going on, X-Ray room ... have permission for photographing a group by Palmer Clarke near entrance to operating theatre in which the Commanding Officer, the Registrar, Quartermaster and two matrons were included 15 02 12 - – photo feature – 15 02 12a Ch, photo – 15 02 19d

1915 08 13

Cattle on commons during night – military to be alerted to danger to cattle through the trenches on the commons being left unprotected; a fence should be erected on Coe Fen 15 08 13

1915 10 08

Recruiting rally, Parker's Piece 15 10 08 p7

1916

Commons used by military : Parker's Piece drilling as was Midsummer Common; Butt Green bayonet gallows & trenches, Coldham's Common artillery park, bomb throwing in trenches, rifle shooting [MPP.55]

1916 02 26

Soldiers practice throwing hand grenades on Parkers Piece - using snowballs [7.17]

1916 07 05

Field Marshal Viscount French, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, visited Parker's Piece, where inspected the Cambridgeshire Territorials from the Administrative centre, Cambridge; the Cambridge University Training Corps and the 2nd and 5th Battalion Officer Cadet Corps. Many hundreds of inhabitants had assembled. He was received with the General Salute, and when he inspected the Cambridgeshire Territorials, he told them they belonged to a regiment in which he took the utmost interest, as he had the honour of being their Colonel. He had watched the behaviour of the 1/1st Battalion in France, and had been proud. He congratulated the officers and instructors on the splendid appearance of the men on parade, and said that great credit was due to them for the men's appearance, steadiness and marching (the recruits had been at the Administrative Centre, Cambridgeshire Regiment Drill Hall, East Road, for periods varying between a few days and five weeks). The troops later formed in column and left Parker's Piece for the University Arms entrance, Lord French taking the salute. Later he addressed a meeting at the Guildhall. 16 07 05 CIP French inspects OCC & Territorial recruits, Parkers Piece & Volunteers on Market Hill – 16 07 05a; photos 16 07 05b

1917 04 04

A Drastic Resolution. The following resolution has been passed by the Allotments Subcommittee for Newnham and Castle End: "That inasmuch as they have received 50 applications for allotments, which they are unable to satisfy, they beg to request the Town Council to break up the Lammas Land at Newnham without delay, viz., without waiting for formal authority from any higher authority". As a result the Borough Member is to be asked to interview the Authorities of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries with regard to the application of the committee for permission to use the Lammas Land and empty common for allotments 17 04 04 CIPof

1918 05 29

Women's Land Army demonstration – 200 parade with motor tractor and traction engine; demonstration of hay bailing on Parker's Piece; should result in large numbers of girls in the district flocking to play their part by filling the gaps left in the ranks of the agricultural workers need for more labour – 18 05 29b, c

1918 08

Photos: intercession service on Parker's Piece Aug 1918 – 18 11 20h

1919 01 22

Returned Prisoners Welcomed. Cambridge gave an enthusiastic welcome home to the returned prisoners of war on Wednesday last. A ready response was made to the request that the Inhabitants should hang out flags and decorations and thousands of people assembled on Parker's Piece and lined the streets to watch the men pass. The proceedings commenced with a general muster on the Piece, which was fortunately favoured by fine weather. Invitations had been issued to some 900 men, and the parade, when assembled, showed a response of about 850. Most of the men were in khaki, and were members of the Cambridgeshire Regiment, the Cambs. Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment (Kitcheners) or the Suffolk Regiment. A few were in plain clothes or in naval uniform. The men paraded through the streets to the Guildhall, where the Lord Lieutenant gave a heart-to-heart address, saying "Welcome, home to England," and adding that the country was proud of them. He wished them, on behalf of the county, a happy return to their homes, great prosperity in the future, and forgetfulness of the horrors they had been through. List of names – 19 01 22b; photo – 19 01 22c CIP

1919 07 09

Peace Day Festival. The Peace Day Festival in Cambridge may be written down as a decided success. In the main event of the day—a huge dinner on Parker's Piece to the discharged and demobilised men of the Borough—there was not a hitch of any kind. The arrangements were as near perfect as could be secured and the men seemed thoroughly to enjoy themselves. The town presented a gay appearance, all the principal thoroughfares being decorated with flags, streamers, etc. Nearly every side-street, too, had its decorations - there were flags and bunting everywhere. Immediately under the Guildhall clock was a large laurel wreath in the centre of which were the words "Their name liveth for evermore." At intervals during the day peals were rung on church bells. Several of the business premises in the town were illuminated with coloured lights during the evening 19 07 09a 19 07 23f-k, photo 19 07 23e

1919 08 06

Refreshment hut on Parker's Piece proposed; should acquire an army hut and place at back of University Arms – debate – 19 08 06f

1920

1920 04 27

Skeleton of woman dug up by plain clothed police on Midsummer Common - CDN 20 04 27

1921 07

Midsummer Common catches fire due to intense heat

1922

Corporation Act allows restriction on grazing, commission swimming pool, also permission to buy certain Lammas Lands & extinguish certain Lammas rights against compensation [3.10 MPP.59]

1922 07

Coldham's Common bathing pool opened [2.21]

1922 08 26

Parker's Piece grass so long it needs cutting as hay [2.2]

1922 08 05

The commencement of the school holidays has at once placed a great strain upon those who are responsible for the conduct of our recreation grounds and open spaces, and nowhere has it been more felt than at Sheep's Green, Cambridge, where our young water-rats spend the greater part of their vacations in alternating river-bathing and sun-baths. The place is in a great state of dilapidation and at any moment might become an utter ruin. The rottenness of the woodwork of the bathing shed is concealed by paint and putty, timbering on both sides of the river is falling to pieces and on the Newnham side the banks are crumbling to bits. It really does seem that before any new bathing places are built this grand old one should be put into a state worthy of its reputation and popularity - Table Talk 22 08 05

1922 08 26

This is the age of new things and I am able to report that harvest operations are in full swing on Parker's Piece. Such economy has been shown in the use of the mowers on our principal ground that the grass has grown to an extent beyond the power of the customary lawnmower to cut, and so a hayreaper has been employed and the resulting heavy swathes have been removed by horse and cart. Two horses and three or four men have been engaged on the work, so if money-saving was the thing intended by keeping to mow off Parker's Piece it has not been very effective 22 08 26

1922 10 19

The proposed new bathing places provided a lively debate at Cambridge Town Centre. Plan A was for a bath on the far side of Sturbridge Common, not far from the railway. Plan B was for a bath on Jesus Green parallel to the river and a little above Victoria Bridge. It would be supplied by water taken from the Cam through pipes from above Jesus weir. The Bullen's Grove site on Sturbridge Common was less overlooked but the great point in favour of Jesus Green was that it was far more accessible and it was finally agreed to approve it 22 10 19

1923

Lammas rights over Lammas Lands, Newnham extinguished [MMC.32]
Council approve exclusion of animals from Jesus Green [MMC.32]

1923 02 01

An attempt to settle the question of the construction of an open-air bath on Jesus Green or Midsummer Common was made at the meeting of the Cambridge Town Council and provide work for the unemployed. Councillor Briggs said unemployment was becoming a serious menace to the town. If they could get this scheme through at once with old enable the Unemployment Committee to have something when they met the unemployed later that day

1923 06 01

Those who attend the Christ Pieces promenade concerts will learn with interest that the Cambridge Town Council approved extensive improvements, including lighting to the bandstand there, to purchase some 500 chairs "for the comfort of the concert goers", and to set up a fenced enclosure, lined with a privet hedge, to accommodate the seats. They further empowered the Committee to set up - as cheaply as possible - glass screens, which will protect the musicians from summer and other breezes, besides effecting an improvement in the acoustics of the stand. The superintendent also produced a plan for the construction of ladies and gentlemen's lavatories on Christ's Pieces 23 06 01 [1.23]

1923 08 25

Jesus Green swimming pool opened [2.24, 6.25]

1923 09 28

Cambridge town council agreed a scheme to construct a road across Coe Fen from the Coach and Horse public house, Newnham, to Coe Fen Lane. The Ministry of Transport have agreed to pay half the cost, and the road will be commenced almost at once so as to provide work for the unemployed during the coming winter. The scheme had been before the Council for nearly 20 years. Nine or 10 schemes had been presented and each member of the council appeared to think his particular scheme was the best. The great advantage of the present scheme was that the whole length of the road would be on the council's own land. 23 09 28 [3.2]

1924

Works starts conversion Jesus Green to sports ground [MMC 33]

1925 07 29

Sir. I was stopped by an aged and indignant citizen who drew my attention to the insertion of wooden pegs about a large proportion of Christ's Pieces. It seems that a large slice is to be taken off for the accommodation of motor cars and buses. Seven or eight lime trees will have to be cut down. It is vandalism to sacrifice a shady pleasnace in the centre of town in order to make a motor park. Must Christ's Pieces be mutilated? – F.E.Y 25 07 29

1925 08

Proposals to create a bus station at Drummer Street cause great protest; 3,000 sign petition, 1,000 march to Mayor's house to demand another Council meeting, August [2.4]

1925 07 31

For an hour and a half Cambridge Town Council discussed the question of taking a portion of Christ's Pieces for the parking of 'buses and private cars. Strong opposition to the scheme was forthcoming but in the end the council agreed. The site will conveniently accommodate 12 buses and at least 35 cars. It would apply to country bus services only, of which there are nine belonging to the Ortona bus company and three belonging to other persons. The whole of the Ortona country service buses, which now stand on Senate House Hill will be removed to the new parking centre 25 07 31

1925 08 09

The Corporation seems to have stirred up a good deal of indignation by their proposals with regard to the Drummer Street "motor park". In a town like Cambridge it certainly seems unwise to do anything that may detract from its attractiveness. A suggestion has been put that the 'park' should be established on Butt's Green and not at Drummer Street at all. A petition has been presented to the Mayor asking her to call at Town's meeting and it is hoped that the request will be acceded to c25 08 09

1925 08 12

The protest meeting against the taking of part of Christ's Pieces for parking motor vehicles attracted a crowd of over 2,000 people to Drummer Street & was marked by a remarkable climax. After a resolution of protest had been passed the crowd voted a desire to take it to the Mayor that night. Speeches had been delivered from a four-wheeled waggon and the shafts were quickly manned and the waggon containing councillors who had spoken was dragged at a good pace to the Mayor's house in Newton Road. Something like a 1,000 people followed in its wake 25 08 12

1925 08 24

As the result of an open-air meeting on Parker's Piece efforts are being made to form a Ratepayers' Association whose first business will be to contest the legality of the Cambridge Town Council's action in encroaching on Christ's Pieces for the purpose of providing a parking place for motor vehicles. This was absolutely illegal. Within twelve months the continual movement of vehicles on what was virtually a made-up bog the road would drop six inches. The Ortona Bus Company will be the first people to say they have been pushed into a rotten corner that is of no use to them 25 08 23

1925 11 28

Drummer Street proposals go ahead, opens in November & various country buses stop there rather than on Senate House Hill; later Ortona also use it, causing overcrowding & disputes [1.14]

1926

End of Mammoth Show which had boarded off large areas of Jesus Green council state this last occasion can have Jesus Green [3.10, MMC 33]

1926 04 29

Rouse Ball pavilion opened, Jesus Green [3.2]

1926 10 28

The name of a well-known onion – Nuneham Park – as a fitting one for the new recreation ground at Newnham, because of the many tears it has caused on the ground of cost, was suggested by Councillor Edwards at Cambridge council. Another name proposed was Lamentations Land as a perpetual reminder that they had been guilty of the most extravagant and wilful expenditure of public money. Finally the Council decided on Lammas Land. It would signify that the ground formerly opened during certain seasons of the year was now closed permanently against any private owner's rights and the public had the rights for the whole of the year 26 10 28

1926 10 30

Two aeroplanes from Duxford Aerodrome came down on Coldham's Common, one being overturned and considerably damaged. One of the machines in a flight of five passing over Cambridge was observed to be in trouble. The single seater fighter had been engaged in firing practice at the Wash. He made a good landing, coming to rest near the bathing-place with just a buckled wheel. A similar machine went to its assistance but was not so fortunate; it struck some bumpy ground and turned right over, coming to rest flat on its back with the wheels in the air 26 10 30

1926 12 02

The official testing took place of the bridges along the new road through Coe Fen, The Fen Causeway. They are Snobbs' Bridge, Flood Water Bridge and the River Bridge. The last is the most important and five steam rollers and one steam tractor, together weighing 63 tons were driven across it, passing each other, thus making 63 tons rolling weight, equivalent to about 100 tons dead weight. The Cambridge Borough Surveyor and councillors boarded a punt and viewed the deflectometer under the bridge, which gave a satisfactory reading. The foundations consist of 100 piles of 40 feet length, weighing about four tons each 26 12 02

1926 12 09

Fen Causeway, the new and important link between Newnham and the rest of Cambridge, was opened by the Mayor. The bridge and its approaches were gaily decorated with bunting and presented a colourful scene. The project of relieving Silver Street traffic had started as long ago as 1904 and discussion had gone on for nearly 20 years before the Town Council approved the plan in 1923. Nine proposals had been put forward and had it not been for the urgency of the unemployment question the same position would have existed today, only instead of nine there might have been nineteen different schemes (Laughter) 26 12 09

1927 06 04

The Mercury Press has produced a verse by Quentin Nelson, in which an undergraduate learns that a road is to be built across Coe Fen, and gives vent to his feelings: "Every frog and every toad, Will croak damnation to your soul!" Well in the first place we don't speak of Coe Fen Road now – it is Fen Causeway – and secondly most of us believe the Fen is being appreciated more nowadays than ever it has been in the past. Still Mr Nelson's poetic outburst is none the less interesting because we do not happen to agree with him

1928 05 25

Amid scenes of enthusiasm the Mayor of Cambridge opened the new Coleridge Road recreation ground which has just been completed at a total cost of £7,000. It was in September 1925 the Corporation bought the ground for the public and ever since then the Surveyor and his merry men had been preparing it. By the autumn they would be able to play football on it and by next summer cricket. They wanted to make a garden as well and if any person felt disposed to present them with a dozen flowering trees the council would make good use of them. Critics said it was not wanted but in the future many would be grateful for it. It would keep the children off the streets and from the danger of the traffic. 28 05 25

1929 02 25

Cambridge councillors debated the proposed exchange of Butts Green for New Square in order that it might be converted into a parking place. If I lived in New Square I should not be at all pleased at the idea of that nice little patch of green giving way to a parking place, but if I had a business establishment in Fitzroy Street I should say "Yes, let the cars park there by all means". There is a danger of New Square being built upon in the near future and residents may consider a car park the least of two evils. Others are concerned about using the amenities of Butts Green, though one questioned whether it was used for anything but beating carpets. CDN 25.2.1929

1930

1930 03 01

History was made on Parker's Piece, Cambridge, when thousands of farmers and farm workers attended a mass demonstration. The meeting was originally intended to bring together workers in East Anglia but interest had become so wide that nearly all the agricultural counties in England were represented. They passed a resolution protesting against the increase in unemployment amongst farmers, unless effective steps are at once taken then nothing but calamity faces the industry. Visitors arrived by train, car, motor coach and bicycle, the ordinary parking facilities were quite inadequate and cars were parked around Parker's Piece itself and along Victoria Avenue. More than an hour before the start crowds assembled in front of the platform of motor lorries covered with a Union Jack and fitted with a battery of amplifiers. They whiled away the time listening to the Railway Band and broke into song when they played 'Farmer's Boy'. 30 03 01a-d

1930 03 27

Ideal cricket weather favoured the long-awaited opening of the Hobbs Pavilion on Parker's Piece by the Mayor of Cambridge in the presence of Mr & Mrs Jack Hobbs. He was the greatest cricketer the world had ever known and had learned to play within sight of this new pavilion. All that was needed was a record of his achievements to hang in the building, but those were not yet over. It would induce the younger sportsmen to become keen again and to carry on the traditions so that in future Cambridge would never be without its representatives in first-class cricket. 30 03 27

1930 07 12

Work has started on the provision of a model yacht pond and paddling pool as part of an extensive scheme for the improvement of Sheep's Green. This is one of numerous schemes for providing work for the unemployed and when operations are in full swing about 70 men will be employed. The Ladies' and Men's Bathing Place will also be extended 30 07 12b

1930 07 22

Cambridge councillors rejected plans for the erection of a bungalow on Robinson Crusoe Island & decided the existing old cottage and shed should be demolished and that the Surveyor should report on the erection of suitable sheds for boating purposes. They also considered land at Town Close, Old Chesterton which is occupied by numerous caravans; their appearance is most objectionable and they should be moved 30 07 22c

1930 09 18

Jack Hobbs came for the first time since the opening of the pavilion that bears his name. He brought one of the most brilliant cricket teams that Parker's Piece has ever seen with seven who have captained England including Hobbs himself and O'Connor, both of whom learned the game in Cambridge. By two o'clock there were at least 5,000 spectators massed three and four deep round the entire field. Others stood on the running boards of cars drawn up in Park Terrace to see the game. 30 09 18b-c

1930 12 06

Sir – all Cambridge men will be alarmed at the threat to build an arterial ring road bisecting Grantchester Meadows. The meadows are owned by King's College; we regard their preservation as a trust; and will not build on them, nor near them. We will do nothing to change their character and refuse to contemplate such a calamity – The Dean of King's 30 12 06b

1931 06 05

The Mayor of Cambridge formally opened the new paddling pool on Sheep Green. It was the result of the Corporation's scheme of work for the unemployed with a £12,000 Government grant. As it has already been 'patronised' by the youngsters for some time now, no great ceremony was observed beyond that of letting with water in again. It is now open to old and young to paddle, but he declined the invitation to do so. 31 06 05k [1.17]

1931 07 17

The question of cricket on Lammas Land, Newnham produced a spirited debate: old ladies crossing the grass might be hit with the hard cricket ball. The Commons Committee is going through a spasm of kill-joy spirit: boys played on the streets but as soon as they went to open space they were told they must not do so. Perhaps a soft ball could be used – or a golf ball. Newnham Institute sought permission for a cricket pitch, but this would turn it into a second Parker's Piece 31 07 17f & g

1932

Cambridge Corporation Act gives council further powers over Midsummer Common or Jesus Green & Butt Green [MPP.61]

1933 01 07

Sir – Coldham's Common could be turned into a municipal nine-hole golf course now it is no longer required for shooting. The Corporation have £700 from the War Office in compensation for not putting the Common in the state it was before the rifle range was constructed. The various firing points and the lower portion of the butts could be used in the construction of a very sporting course, providing work for the unemployed. It would be no new thing to have golf played on the Common as the first University course was there – RG 33 01 07d

1935 02 17

Coldham's Common being levelled – photo – 35 02 17

1935 08 02

The new swimming bath on Coldham's Common was opened by the Mayor, Alderman R. Starr. There was some regret that his Worship did not take the first plunge into the 150 feet long pool, which takes its water from the high level stream, and youthful spectators had to be restrained from going in as soon as the doors were unlocked. There is a diving tower and spring board at the deep end with dressing sheds and a space fenced off for sun bathing. 35 08 02a

1936 03 03

Trinity Hall had purchased Cherry Hinton Hall Estate with a view to development and asked the council to let them proceed or to buy it as a public park for £13,000. This was more than they'd paid but the land had recently been brought within the Borough boundary and if they were to acquire open space in areas ripe for development they should have to pay building land price. They would move the

Horticultural Department there and let the grazing but parts of the house would probably be demolished– 36 03 03a 36 03 05a & b

1937 05 03

Labour Party's May Day demonstration on Parker's Piece, 500 marches – 37 05 03a & b

1937 05 26

Sir – today I wandered down to Christ's Pieces. Hearing the band I came to the entrance and behold there was a sign 'Admittance 3d'. I am told that an ancient footpath crosses there. But it must be kept select or perhaps a poor woman with her pram might mix with the few who have paid their threepence. Besides poor people cannot be expected to enjoy the music of a band. The hedge around the bandstand is thick enough to protect those inside from the gaze of the vulgar crowd. So we listened and looked at the band from the street. Cambridge knows how to keep the common herd in their place. But did I not hear somebody say that the people, not the council, own the park? – Canadian 37 05 26a

1937 08 04

Sir, as a former critic of Histon Road Cemetery may I now acknowledge the improvement which is so apparent, especially to the curator who had no easy task in taking over such a neglected place. However Alexandra Gardens in Carlyle Road is probably the worst kept of all the recreation grounds. The grass verges have been neither mown nor trimmed this year and no hoe has been used on the shrubbery border which is a mass of thistles and other weeds. It seems difficult to believe that no member of the Council ever pays a visit – 'Observer' 37 08 04

1938 03 21

Cherry Hinton Hall was a 'white elephant' and should be let as a Youth Hostel. Some 2,000 people a year would use it, spending money in Cambridge. To turn the hall, which had many rooms, into a place for meetings would mean expensive interior alterations – it would be cheaper to put up a smaller place. When the council had bought the area, the house had not even been valued, it was bought on land value alone. Parts of the ground could be used for recreation with an outdoor swimming pool - there was a stream to provide the water. 38 03 21b, 38 03 25

1939-45

Donkey common requisitioned & afterwards the huts that had been erected there were used for emergency housing [MMC.55]

1940

1941 07 24

War-time allotments – over 50 acres under cultivation, 2,000 provided with vegetables; first piece of land was in Ainsworth Street in Oct 1939 – 41 07 24

1944 12 08

"Stand down" parade. The famous sward of Parker's Piece has been the scene of many historic ceremonies, but none, surely in what feelings of those taking part as principals or spectators have been so mixed as on Sunday, when Cambridge saw her own part in the great Home Guard "stand down". After an impressive last parade, the Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Home Guard marched away, conscious not only of the thanks of the King, but of the gratitude of their own fellow citizens. 44 12 08 CIPof

1945 09 21

Parker's Piece lamp standard broken during VJ celebrations [1.7]

1947 07 09

May I explain why St Matthew's Piece has not yet been restored to its former state. It was requisitioned by the War Department for a vehicle car-park. The surface and foundations were not suitable for such purposes and the military authorities were told that their vehicles would cause extensive damage to the playing area and would involve them in a heavy claim for compensation. When the War Department released the site the Corporation lodged a substantial claim for reinstatement. The claim has now been referred to higher authority for arbitration. My committee sincerely regret that the ratepayers of St Matthew's ward and their children in particular, have been deprived of the use of this ground for so long – letter from G.F. Nobbs, Chairman Cambridge commons and cemetery committee 47 07 09

1947 07 23

Sir. It is very interesting to read that those in authority on our local Council at last have abandoned the idea of spoiling Petersfield by spending nearly £2,000 on a paddling pool and reverting to its former condition, the present static water tank will therefore be demolished. Would it be out of place to suggest some sort of supervision be given to safeguard the beautiful trees and shrubs from destruction and grounds kept in decent condition? Perhaps, at the same time, those unsightly and out of date notices "To the shelter" could be removed - letter from E.H. Tatchell, 1 Willis Rd, Cambridge 47 07 23

1949

Only one stall on Parker's Piece but no Good Friday skipping, in 1948 only three groups of people who continued it & that year stalls dwindled to one which set up at junction of East Road & Gonville Place & sold tinsel-covered balls on elastic [4.2]

1949 05 221

Cambridge was the scene of a "ceremony of the keys" about midnight on May 12th when the borough pindar, Mr Bill Clee, went round a number of Cambridge commons unlocking the gates so that in accordance with rights dating back hundreds of years those who wished could have access to the commons to graze their stock. Travelling on an auto-cycle he unlocked no fewer than 17 gates on his journey. I gather there were no queues of stock waiting to sample the fresh green grass. There is a wild west touch about the animals on the commons now, for each one is branded to indicate that the owner has paid the required fee c49 05 26

1949 06 02

The Secretary of State for War, Mr Shinwell, states that there are 43 huts on the camp site at Donkey common, Cambridge. They were originally intended to accommodate three officers and 224 other ranks. There is now one Women's Royal Army Corps unit and a small detachment of Pioneers, comprising three officers and 76 other ranks in all 49 06 02

1949 08 13

Sir – Many of your readers will be perturbed to hear of the recent happening on Coe Fen camp. The council has forced the removal of all chickens and rabbits kept by tenants. The real reason in my view is the marring of the view from Trumpington road by the camp. Nissen encampments are not beautiful but the solution to the problem is the building of proper homes for the people at present forced by the acute housing shortage to live there – Jane Wolstencroft 49 08 13

1950

1950 10 18

Cambridge housing committee recommends the installation of television sets should not be allowed at Donkey common, as it would not be advisable to erect aerials on the roof of the huts. If erected independently they would have to be supported by guy-ropes which might prove a nuisance to other tenants and a danger to children 50 10 18

1951 05 26

Protests over proposals for parking at Regent Terrace “should not be over sentimental about a small piece of grass [1.14]

1951 06 21

Strong protests were voiced at the District Trades Council when the proposed car park site on Parker’s Piece came under discussion. Mr C. Hatton said: “We have seen parts of Christ’s Pieces and the whole of Donkeys Common disappear and now there are proposals to encroach on Parker’s Piece. We cannot too jealously guard such a priceless amenity”. He would like to see all car waiting in the centre of Cambridge abolished and car parks instituted on the outskirts of the city 51 06 21 [1.15]

1951 07 20

“Utmost vigilance” on the part of the Cambridge Trades Council was needed to make sure the city council does not “pull a fast one” in its proposals to reserve a slice of Parker’s Piece for car parking facilities. “I think the City council have put this back for six months and will bring it up again when they think it has all died down”, said the chairman. “We don’t want to lose even a piece of one of the city’s cherished beauty spots”. There was no need for a parking site in Regent Terrace as the accommodation of other parking places was not being overtaxed

1951 09 07

Tenants of 34 huts on the Donkeys Common “Estate”, Cambridge, are feeling anxious about their security of tenure. They regard a letter from the City Treasurer as a veiled threat for them to leave their make-shift homes. Residents say they have no bath facilities, water closets adjoin each other and are therefore not fully private, there are no doors on the bedrooms and that they suffer from dampness, mice, ants and ‘many other forms of insect life’. They add: “We intend to remain here until equal or better accommodation is provided by the City Housing Committee 51 09 07

1952

The Common Lands of Cambridgeshire – a detailed account of the commons – published by County Council [MMC.]

1952 10 28

Elms on Parker’s Piece felled for roundabout at East Road junction [1.16]

1953 12 04

Cambridge councillors approved a £22,000 scheme for the improvement of Jesus Green Swimming Pool despite fears that this might prejudice chances of an indoor pool. It was an outdoor pool, used for about 110 days a year; last year 55,000 people used it but it ran at a loss and each one cost the City sixpence. It would be filled from the mains & filtered to remove impurities. More would use it if they could go into water that looked like water and not soup. Others thought they ought to enclose half the present bath so it could be used all year – but this would make it look like a shed and bring criticism

1955 04 29

Cambridge City Council has decided to proceed with the erection of an indoor swimming bath on Donkey Common. It is to be used for swimming only and not for dances, concerts or meetings. But some objected as they wanted to preserve all the open spaces they could. There were sometimes as many as ten cricket matches on Parker’s Piece and Donkey Common was a place where mothers could allow their children to play in safety avoiding the flying cricket balls. The huts had been placed there as a war-time expedient and it should be returned to its former state. 55 04 29e & f

1955 10 15

The condition of the huts on Donkey Common has steadily deteriorated and they should only be let to families requiring emergency accommodation who can be rehoused by September 1957. Some are so bad they will have to be closed before that and when the worst of them become vacant they should not be re-let. The Council should purchase 50 premises due for demolition and carry out minimum repairs to allow them to be occupied temporarily. 55 10 15b

1956 03 13

Christ's Pieces bandstand to go 56 03 13b

1956 04 21

The demolition of the bandstand on Christ's Pieces jogged memories for Robert Austin who played on it as a band-boy, bandsman and conductor for over 45 years. It was originally built for the Royal Show on Midsummer Common and afterwards re-erected on the Pieces. It was lighted by naked gas jets which usually blew out and had to be re-lit several times during a performance. The Volunteers, Police and Town bands - between all of whom there was intense rivalry – played there. It was also used for mass meetings and an annual open-air service of Cambridge Men's Brotherhood. 56 04 21c

1956 04 28

Christ's Pieces bandstand from Royal Show 1894 – 56 04 28c

1957

Royal Commission on Common Lands takes evidence [MMC.37]

1957 05 17

Parker's Piece underground carpark proposal May [1.19]

1957 07 20

A giant super-modern heated indoor swimming pool with a roof-top restaurant may be constructed on Donkey common. It would have space for 230 bathers with 600 spectators, parking for 35 cars and 200 cycles and a view across Parker's Piece from the restaurant. Changing rooms for footballers and cricketers could be installed later. It could be in use within three years. 57 07 20a & c

1957 10 14

Proposals for an 800-space car park under Parker's Piece are technically impossible, opponents say. There are 'certain unsound features', it would be detrimental to the area and it would take years for the ground to be reinstated. The cost would probably be as great as that of the planned scheme in Lion Yard, though no car park of this nature has yet been constructed. But Labour councillors want it carried out as a matter of urgency. 57 10 14

1958 11 28

Scheme to take part of Parker's Piece for cars [1.21]

1958 12 01

Putting the park in Parker's Piece – 58 12 01 & a

1959

Minister gives permission for swimming pool on Donkey Common [MMC.56]

1959 04 24

Parker's Piece edges not to be used for parking, Donkey common instead – 59 04 24 & a, b

1959 04 27

Sir - Few can remember Donkey Common's original use as a common grazing ground for ponies. The A.T.S. officer who occupied the war-time hutments did her best to maintain such legal grazing rights by getting a flock of geese to keep the grass down. The Royal Engineers Colonel who had the hutments built drew up his plans so as not to destroy the main avenue of well-grown limes nor any of the acacia, hawthorn and other trees. The sappers built so soundly that the Corporation was able to make use of the buildings in the post-war housing shortage until this year. Now if it is to be used as a swimming pool or car park, may I plead to let it perish under its old and correct name of Donkey (not 'Donkey's') Common – B. Nevinson 59 04 27

1959 06 26

Donkey Common is to be cleared and used as a car park until needed for the new swimming pool. Two years ago the Housing Committee had said they still needed the huts for emergency accommodation but the cluster of rusty scabs were an eyesore and disgrace to the city and should be removed as soon as possible, councillors were told. 59 06 26c

1959 10 19

Donkey Common – trouble over huts – 59 10 19c

1959 11 26

Butt Green protest over plans to use as temporary car park – 59 11 26e

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files from this date

1960 12 07

Indoor swimming pool Donkey common starts work – 60 12 07f

1962 08 09

Henry Merton, commons pinder – 62 08 09

1963 02 02

Parts of the Backs should be flooded and turned into skating rinks, says a Cambridge botanist. There are a few natural ideal spots, used for lawn tennis, which could be easily flooded to provide skating. The initial cost would be insignificant but the benefit for the young and ‘young at heart’ (meaning dons) would be enormous. The maintenance of the skating rink would be easily covered by a small entrance fee. And it wouldn’t spoil the tennis courts as ice and snow give the best protection for the species of grasses which might otherwise be damaged by the continuous cold. 63 02 02a

1963 02 18

Parker’s Piece covered with packed ice & snow - skating [4.1]

1963 04 01

Parkside indoor pool was opened by Ald Ridgeon and dozens of young members of Cambridge swimming clubs who had been sitting round the edges of the pool jumped into the water, splashing and cheering. A colourful and exciting gala followed featuring Linda Ludgrove, the double gold medallist at the Empire Games, and several Olympic swimming stars. The new building, which took three years to erect at a cost of £250,000, contains two heated pools; the main one has diving boards while the beginners’ pool has a constant depth of two feet six inches. 63 04 01 talked of for 100 years [6.16, 17.8]

1963 07 29

Lime Kiln Hill was closed to traffic and pedestrians while Sappers used high explosives to blow up the kiln shaft and the tunnel leading to it. They blasted six-foot deep holes which they gouged deeper so as to blow in the thick pit walls. Then sentries ensured everyone was clear before a tremendous bang carried rocks and earth high in the sky. The shaft walls were cracked or ripped apart and surrounding trees and shrubs were almost non-existent. Electricity wires some way away from the explosion were broken. But a practice climbing wall used by the CU Mountaineering Club was left standing. 63 07 29a

1966 07 29

City planner Gordon Logie reveals six possible scheme for a new Cambridge shopping centre; one would build on part of Christ’s Pieces and extend grass over the King St area – 66 07 29, a, b

1963 11 26

Proposed 750 vehicle underground car park between central lamp standard & Regent Terrace
(abandoned 1964) [4.3]

1966 08 05

‘Before the sacrifice of our heritage’ – article by Dr D.R. Taunt, Bursar of Jesus College following
‘Shopping growth in Cambridge’ report dealing with Christ’s Pieces – 66 08 05a, b

1966 11 21

King’s Hedges estate 10 acre site for recreation ground agreed near proposed housing development
off Campkin Rd – 66 11 21

1968

Common lands registered under Commons Registration Act 1965, does not include Parker’s Piece
(leads to disputes throughout following decade) [MPP.64,MMC]

1968 10 24

Parker’s Piece plan to be re-examined, shelved 10 years ago, scrapped [4.4]

1968 11 01

Parker’s Piece plan scrapped

1971 10 07

Queen Anne Terrace car park opened, proposal 400 sq yds entrance Queen Anne car park, petition,
DOE inquiry, postponed [4.5]

1975

Sports Hall opened [MMC.60]

1976 09 10

Most of 38 century-old elms face chop due Dutch elm disease [4.6]

1978 03 18

Ena Mitchell wants Parker’s Piece registered as town green, but would stop council hiring out
sporting facilities there [4.7]

1978 09 12

Problems of illegal parking on commons continue, park commons not New Square [3.4]

1979

Objection on registration common lands

1981 03 21

Cambridge City Council may go into small-scale farming to try to raise extra money for the
ratepayers, buying 20 Hereford store cattle for grazing on Lammas Land and Sheep’s Green. The cost
could be taken from money earmarked for maintaining the common lands where, under an old law,
people can graze cattle, paying a nominal rent of £32 for the right to pasture nearly 200 animals. Most
are not really farmers but come together to buy ten animals each and never go near them, taking
advantage of rules which prevent the council charging an up-to-date rent. 81 03 21

1982 05 19

Prince Philip flew into Cambridge and made what is believed to be the first helicopter landing on
Parker’s Piece. It made quite a stir among people making their way to work. It may also have made
them late because police cordoned off the Piece for the landing, special permission for which had
been obtained from the City Council 82 05 19

1984 03 17

Lammas Land car park plans dropped [3.7]

1985 08

Peace garden open Christ's Pieces [3.a9]

1985 11 14

Cambridge City Council Act passed without difficulty: gives up- to-date control over commons, grazing rights, fairgrounds, recreation grounds & river [7.12]

1987 08 13

A news reporter visited Cambridge's three main swimming pools. First stop was the Abbey outdoor pool where each morning attendants try to remove the frogs which hop into the water from a nearby ditch overnight. The changing room is a bench behind a hut and the water felt like freshly-melted ice. Jesus Green may only have 20-30 swimmers a day but they are real regulars, including Arthur Mansfield, 77, who swims a quarter of a mile most days as he has since 1922. Then I followed the smell of the chlorine to Parkside Pool which was the hottest but far from enjoyable 87 08 13a & b

1988 03 17

Parkside swimming pool plans for water sports complex – 88 03 17a

1989 02 11

Blanket ban on events Midsummer common to protect common ¢CEN 11.2.89

1989 04 22

£1M plan convert Parkside swimming pool into water leisure centre scrapped ¢CEN 22.4.89

1989 04 24

Labour to press ahead ¢CEN 24.4.89

1989 07 05

Wandlebury 164a site proposed for sanctuary, nature & recreation ¢CEN 5.7.89

1990 03 24

Cambridge University boat crews are backing the campaign to stop a road and bridge being built between Ditton Meadows and Coldham's Common as part of a traffic management plan to tackle Cambridge' chronic road congestion problems. Socam – Save Our Commons and Meadows – say the environment would be ruined and there is no justification for it. 93 03 24a

